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The Meaning of Thanksgiving Day

Carolyn Wells

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

GM

Successful Rural Plays

A Strong List From Which to Select Your Next Play

FARM FOLKS. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. For five male and six female characters. Time of playing, two hours and a half. One simple exterior, two easy interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Flora Goodwin, a farmer's daughter, is engaged to Philip Burleigh, a young New Yorker. Philip's mother wants him to marry a society woman, and by falseheods makes Flora believe Philip does not love her. Dave Weston, who wants Flora himself, helps the deception by intercepting a letter from Philip to Flora. She agrees to marry Dave, but on the eve of their marriage Dave confesses, Philip learns the truth, and he and Flora are reunited. It is a simple plot, but full of speeches and situations that sway an audience alternately to tears and to laughter.

HOME TIES. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. Characters, four male, five female. Plays two hours and a half. Scene, a simple interior—same for all four acts. Costumes, modern. One of the strongest plays Mr. Tubbs has written. Martin Winn's wife left him when his daughter Ruth was a baby. Harold Vincent, the nephew and adopted son of the man who has wronged Martin, makes love to Ruth Winn. She is also loved by Len Everett, a prosperous young farmer When Martin discovers who Harold is, he orders him to leave Ruth. Harold, who does not love sincerely, yields. Ruth discovers she loves Len, but thinks she has lost him also. Then he comes back, and Ruth finds her happiness.

THE OLD NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME. A New England Drama in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For seven males and four females. Time, two hours and a half. Costumes, modern. A play with a strong heart interest and pathos, yet rich in humor. Easy to act and very effective. A rural drama of the "Old Homstead" and "Way Down East" type. Two exterior scenes, one interior, all easy to set. Full of strong situations and delightfully humorous passages. The kind of a play everybody understands and likes.

THE OLD DAIRY HOMESTEAD. A Rural Comedy in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For five males and four females. Time, two hours. Rural costumes. Scenes rural exterior and interior. An adventurer obtains a large sum of money from a farm house through the intimidation of the farmer's niece, whose husband he claims to be. Her escapes from the wiles of the villain and his female accomplice are both starting and novel.

A WHITE MOUNTAIN BOY. A Strong Melodrama in Five Acts, by CHARLES TOWNSEND. For seven males and four females, and three supers. Time, two hours and twenty minutes. One exterior, three interiors. Costumes easy. The hero, a country lad, twice saves the life of a banker's daughter, which results in their betrothal. A scoundrelly clerk has the banker in his power, but the White Mountain boy finds a way to checkmate his schemes, saves the banker, and wins the girl.

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

THE MEANING OF THANKSGIVING DAY

A Seasonal Play

By

CAROLYN WELLS

Author of "Queen Christmas," "The Sweet Girl Graduate," etc.

PHILADELPHIA

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The Meaning of Thanksgiving Day

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The Meaning of Thanksgiving Day

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CERES—Goddess of Grain.
POMONA—Goddess of Fruits.
PEACE—An Attendant.
PLENTY—An Attendant.
FATHER TIME.
MOTHER EARTH.
GRANDFATHER.
GRANDMOTHER.
FATHER.
MOTHER.
SON.
DAUGHTER.

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COSTUMES

CERES, Goddess of Grain, wears costume of light yellow and wheat ears and poppies in her hair. She presides over the sheaves.

POMONA, Goddess of Fruits, wears costume of deep yellow and russet or red, with autumn leaves and flowers. She presides over the harvest of vegetables and fruits.

PEACE wears a costume of white, with classic draperies.

PLENTY wears a costume of purple and gold.

FATHER TIME wears the usually pictured "Father Time" costume.

MOTHER EARTH wears a costume of brown and green, trimmed with leaves. She carries a garden basket with small tools and little pots of slips or cuttings. A few flowers are stuck carelessly in her hair or on her dress.

GRANDFATHER wears picturesque costume of Colonial or Pilgrim Father type.

GRANDMOTHER wears picturesque costume of Colonial or Pilgrim Mother type.

FATHER wears modern, attractive clothes.

MOTHER wears modern, attractive clothes.

SON wears up-to-date outing clothes.

DAUGHTER wears an attractive sport suit.

The Meaning of Thanksgiving Day

SCENE.—*Harvest Hall. Decorated with Autumn leaves, vines and evergreens, also late Autumn flowers. On one side are picturesque heaps of all sorts of Autumn fruits and vegetables, and on the other side, sheaves of grain, corn, etc., attractively arranged.*

(CERES, POMONA, PEACE *and* PLENTY *discovered on stage.*)

(*The four sing. Air, "Battle Hymn of the Republic."*)

The earth has rolled around again and harvest time is here,
The glory of the seasons and the crown of all the year;
Let us voice our thanks and praises in a chorus of good cheer,
For it is Thanksgiving Day.

For the early crops and later,
For the lesser fruits and greater,
All give thanks to our Creator,
For it is Thanksgiving Day.

We're thankful for the sunshine and we're thankful for the rain,
That blessed our faithful labors and that ripened fruit and grain;
And the harvest so abundant shows our work was not in vain,
On this Thanksgiving Day.

(*Chorus as above.*)

(*Enter* FATHER TIME. *He bows to the* GODDESSES *with great dignity.*)

TIME.

Ceres! Pomona! Peace and Plenty, too.
Greetings and compliments I bring to you.
Fair goddesses of bounty, I declare,
Each year your harvest seems more rich and rare.
And I appreciate,—with thanks sincere,
This splendid product of a bounteous year.
Pomona,—Ceres,—at your feet I lay
My tribute on this glad Thanksgiving Day.

(TIME *lays a long green palm at the feet of each goddess, then goes to the seat prepared for him on a platform at the back center of stage.* PEACE *and* PLENTY *take up the palms and put them in appropriate places.*)

(*Enter* MOTHER EARTH. *She is plump and smiling, and carries a garden basket with small tools and little pots of slips or cuttings. A few flowers are stuck carelessly in her hair or dress, and her effect is gay, busy and good-natured.*)

EARTH.

Good-day, Pomona,—good-day, Ceres, dear.
What noble showing of Thanksgiving cheer!
(*Looks critically, and fingers the exhibit.*)
Fine turnips and potatoes—I'll allow!
And apples, right up to the mark, I vow!
These are some pumpkins! And this wheat and corn
I've never seen surpassed since I was born!
Goddesses, dear, you've surely done me proud,
With joy I sing your praises, long and loud.
What say you, Father Time, don't you agree
A fairer, finer harvest scarce could be?

(MOTHER EARTH *goes to her place, beside* TIME, *and then all sing.*)

CHORUS (*air, "Seeing Nelly Home."*)

Now the Harvest moon is shining
In the blue of Heaven's dome.
And within this hall of peace and plenty
We have met for Harvest Home.
Here we sing our Harvest Home,
Our abundant Harvest Home;
And with songs of joy and glad Thanksgiving,
Celebrate our Harvest Home.

TIME.
We are at one, my children, one and all
Who are here gathered in this Harvest Hall.
Fair Ceres, with her grain in golden sheaves,
Pomona, with her store of fruits and leaves;
Dear Peace and Plenty, happy in thought
That Harvest time hath such abundance brought.
While Mother Earth is smiling in content;
And I, myself, enjoy the glad event.
And yet,—this peace and plenty,—all of it,
Is meant the human race to benefit.
Now here's a question that I'd like to ask;
As they, in this fair peace and plenty bask,
Do they appreciate what we bestow?
And are they grateful? This I'd like to know.

EARTH.
That's so, oh, Father Time, I've often thought
Some folks don't seem as grateful as they ought.
Do they show gratitude? Not they, indeed!
They take all that we give,—and pay no heed ——

TIME.
Now, Mother Earth, don't you be too severe
On our own children! Maybe, if we'd hear
Their story ——

EARTH. That's the thing to do! I say,
To-day they celebrate Thanksgiving Day
On earth. And I propose we try to find
Just what Thanksgiving means to mortal mind.

TIME.
How go about it?

PEACE. I'll suggest a way.
Let's bring some mortal up here,—let him say
Just what he means by giving thanks.

EARTH. And then
By him can we judge all the mortal men?

TIME.
A man and woman both, we must invite.

PLENTY.
Nay, more than that. I think it would be right
To bring a family ——

EARTH. Yes, that's it! You know
Thanksgiving Day's a family feast, and so,
Go, Peace and Plenty,—quick, be on your way!
And bring a family here from earth.

PEACE. But stay,—
What is a family?

TIME. Family? Let me see;
A father and a mother there must be ——

EARTH.
Grandfather and grandmother, too, I think.

TIME.
Yes, and a son and daughter. Quick as wink,
Fly, Peace and Plenty, and bring back with you,
A human family,—typical and true.

(PEACE *and* PLENTY *depart on their errand. The four remaining sing. Air, "Highland Laddie."*)

POMONA.
Oh, what do you think that a mortal family's like?

CERES.
Oh, what do you think that a mortal family's like?

EARTH.
They're not a bit like you, dears, they're made of common clay.

TIME.
But it's aye in my heart that they love Thanksgiving Day!

POMONA.
Oh, what do you think that a human family 'll do?

CERES.
Oh, what do you think that a human family 'll do?

EARTH.
They'll do the queerest things, dear, the queerest things they'll say.

TIME.
But it's aye in my heart that they'll love Thanksgiving Day.

(*Enter* PEACE *and* PLENTY, *bringing the* HUMAN FAMILY: GRANDFATHER *and* GRANDMOTHER; FATHER *and* MOTHER; SON: *athletic, up-to-date, wholesome young man;* DAUGHTER: *efficient, sensible and pretty. The best type of modern girlhood.*)

(*The old people have courtly, courteous manners. The parents are well-bred and conventional. The young people are frankly curious and enthusiastic.*)

CERES *and* POMONA.
Welcome, oh, mortals, to our Harvest Home.

GRANDMOTHER (*dropping old-fashioned curtsey*).
Thank you; we're very glad, indeed, to come.

GRANDFATHER.
My! it's a treat to see such garden truck!

FATHER.
Yes; in your crops you surely had good luck!

SON (*smiling, but superior*).
Not luck, Dad. It is scientific skill.

TIME (*kindly*).
It's hard work, laddie, that best fills the bill.
Now, mortals, by your leave, we brought you here
For your opinion of Thanksgiving cheer.
To put it plainly,—will you tell us, please,
How you return your thanks for gifts like these?

EARTH.
Or, to express it in another way,
How do you give thanks on Thanksgiving Day?

MOTHER (*of a housewifely type, and smiling broadly*).
In my opinion, if you ask of me,
When all these bounties of the earth I see,
I'd show appreciation, I confess,
By eating and enjoying them—no less!
And every mother in this whole broad land,
My notion of the day will understand!

POMONA (*heartily*).
I understand! Naught can more joy afford
Than to preside o'er a Thanksgiving board!

MOTHER *and* POMONA (*sing together; air, "Solomon Levi"*).
A mother's soul is full of joy, a mother's heart is gay,
When the children all come trooping home to spend Thanksgiving Day.
And the mother's face is smiling bright, with honest pride aglow,
When she views her tempting pantry shelves, with goodies all a-row!
Big batches of doughnuts and pumpkin pies she makes;
Nut cake and pound cake and cookies, too, she bakes;
She roasts the ducks and turkeys and makes jellies, jams and creams,
Her puddings are perfection and her Angel cakes are dreams;

She makes such soups and sauces and such salad and soufflée.
No wonder all the family comes to spend Thanksgiving Day!

GRANDMOTHER.
All true, my daughter, but, remember, too,
Beside the family welcomed home by you,
A wider hospitality it shows
If you add friends and neighbors unto those;
Invite them all,—aye, as the good Book states,
Welcome the stranger that's within thy gates.

EARTH.
Yes, Grandmother, you're right,—and to my mind,
To share our blessings shows a spirit kind;
True hospitality to all who come
Shows gratitude for gifts of Harvest Home.

GRANDMOTHER *and* EARTH (*sing; air, "When the Swallows Homeward Fly"*).
In the days of long ago,
Sleigh-bells jingled o'er the snow;
Neighbors flocked from far and near,
Joining in our homely cheer.
Tables groaned 'neath savory load,
Blazing logs on hearthstones glowed,
Hospitality's glad sway
Ruled the old Thanksgiving Day.

FATHER.
Now, that's all very well. But, I declare
You women-folks don't seem to know or care
Where these things come from. Let me tell you now,
Unless somebody drives a busy plow,
Prepares the earth and plants the proper seeds,
And digs and rakes and hoes and pulls up weeds,
And cultivates the soil with judgment wise.—
You won't have any pumpkins for your pies!

And I should say the way for us to show
The gratitude that we most surely owe
To Nature and to Nature's God for these
Rich gifts,—that both the eye and palate please,
Is to replant our garden every year,
And so bring forth anew the harvest cheer.

TIME.

That's right, sir. I agree. As all men know,
You cannot harvest what you do not sow.
And your appreciation is well shown
In each successive harvest you have grown.

SON.

And yet—excuse me, Time,—I'm young, you know,
But I am not content merely to grow
A crop or harvest for myself,—nor heed
The greater question of the country's need.
And other countries, too. Sir, I maintain
We should conserve our foodstuffs and our grain,
A Food Administrator there should be
Marked by wise judgment and efficiency.
By business methods such as these, I'll say,
We'd show our gratitude in proper way.

CERES.

Young man, you're in the right, it seems to me;
With all you've said I heartily agree.
I'd gladly see the fields of golden grain
Conserved with care for mankind's good and gain.

CERES *and* SON (*sing; air, "A Life on the Ocean Wave"*).

See the golden wheatfields wave,
And the scarlet poppies blow;
'Tis the sun and rain that gave
Such glory here below.
The cornfields green and fair,
The buckwheat and the rye,
Thrive in the shimmering air,
'Neath the blue midsummer sky.

See the grain fields wave and toss
O'er the acres far and wide;
A gold that knows no dross
Adorns the countryside.
Such bounty year by year,
Is given to the earth,
And Autumn's harvest here
But heralds Spring's rebirth.

GRANDFATHER.
Aye, aye, my children, 'tis a glorious sight,
The waving cornfields in the sunshine bright.
And I, who now am old and full of days,
Reverently offer up my thanks and praise
To the great Giver,—to our God above,
Who well deserves our thanks and praise and love.

GRANDFATHER *sings, with* PEACE *and* PLENTY (*air, "America"*).

Our fathers' God to thee,
All thanks and praises be
For Harvest cheer;
To thee our thanks we bring,
To thee our praises sing,
For thou art God and King
Of all the year.

GIRL (*who has been quietly listening*).
Now, if you please, I have a word to say.
You've missed the meaning of Thanksgiving Day!
For all the rich abundance of this store
You have expressed your pleasure o'er and o'er.
And, mother,—you and grandmother make claim
Thanksgiving dinner is its end and aim!
Father,—and brother,—you more crops would raise.
Grandfather, your heart's full of prayer and praise.
And all these things are right,—but I still say
You've missed the meaning of Thanksgiving Day!

TIME (*amused*).
Tell us, my child, what you have in your mind.

EARTH (*a little cynical*).
Yes, tell us what new-fangled way you find
To celebrate this Festival of cheer.

CERES.
Yes, tell us! I'd be very glad to hear.

POMONA.
A bright young thing like you will surely know
Some better way your gratitude to show.

GIRL.
Indeed I do! And yet, what's in my head
In no way contradicts what has been said
By these, my elders. They're all right, you know.
But I a little further want to go.
And this is what I mean. You all agree
Thanksgiving Day a day of thanks should be.

ALL.
Thanksgiving Day a day of thanks should be.

GIRL.
That's logical enough. And yet I find
A further bit of logic in my mind.
Thanksgiving Day's a day of thanks, 'tis true;
But is it not a day of giving, too?
Thanks-giving Day! When that phrase you have heard,
A day of thanks uses but half the word.
Let's use the rest! You see? a day of giving!
Isn't that so? As true as that you're living!
And while in gratitude you praise and pray,
Your Thanks Day should be also Giving Day.
You see the point,—you understand, I'm sure;
Give of your bounty,—give it to the poor.
Give food and clothing,—give them coal and wood,—
Give them —— Oh, give them anything that's good!

Fill a big basket from your storeroom shelf
And carry it to somebody yourself!
Give jellies to the sick,—flowers to the sad,—
Give anything that will make some one glad;
Give a cash present to a needy friend,
Don't be afraid that such things will offend,—
For, if the spirit of the gift is right,
You'll find 'twill be accepted with delight.
Get busy at this giving,—every one!
There's so much giving waiting to be done!
Let every one of us pick out some way
To put the "Giving" in Thanksgiving Day!

ALL (*sing in chorus; air, "My Maryland"*).
We've found the meaning of the word,
Giving Day, Thanksgiving Day!
By gratitude our hearts are stirred,
Giving Day, Thanksgiving Day.
Let us do all that we can do,
To make some others grateful, too,
And may it be for me and you,
Giving Day, Thanksgiving Day.

Again into our lives has come
Giving Day, Thanksgiving Day.
Once more we sing our Harvest Home,
Giving Day, Thanksgiving Day.
Thanksgiving is our theme, you know,
And while our thanks to God we owe,
We owe our giving here below,
Giving Day, Thanksgiving Day.

(*Attendants bring in baskets, and the characters on the stage fill them from the stores of harvest. While thus engaged, they sing; air, "Old Black Joe."*)
We all agree with what we've just now heard;
We have all learned the meaning of the word;

Thanksgiving Day means thanks to God above,
And giving cheer to those on earth who need our love.
Thanks-giving, Thanks-giving, make up Thanks-giving Day;
Give thanks to God and gifts to mortals, Thanks-giving Day!

CURTAIN

Successful Plays for All Girls

In Selecting Your Next Play Do Not Overlook This List

YOUNG DOCTOR DEVINE. A Farce in Two Acts, by MRS. E. J. H. GOODFELLOW. One of the most popular plays for girls. For nine female characters. Time in playing, thirty minutes. Scenery, ordinary interior. Modern costumes. Girls in a boarding-school, learning that a young doctor is coming to vaccinate all the pupils, eagerly consult each other as to the manner of fascinating the physician. When the doctor appears upon the scene the pupils discover that the physician is a female practitioner.

SISTER MASONS. A Burlesque in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. For eleven females. Time, thirty minutes. Costumes, fantastic gowns, or dominoes. Scene, interior. A grand expose of Masonry. Some women profess to learn the secrets of a Masonic lodge by hearing their husbands talk in their sleep, and they institute a similar organization.

A COMMANDING POSITION. A Farcical Entertainment, by AMELIA SANFORD. For seven female characters and ten or more other ladies and children. Time, one hour. Costumes, modern. Scenes, easy interiors and one street scene. Marian Young gets tired living with her aunt, Miss Skinflint. She decides to "attain a commanding position." Marian tries hospital nursing, college settlement work and school teaching, but decides to go back to housework.

HOW A WOMAN KEEPS A SECRET. A Comedy in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. For ten female characters Time, half an hour. Scene, an easy interior. Costumes, modern Mabel Sweetly has just become engaged to Harold, but it's "the deepest kind of a secret." Before announcing it they must win the approval of Harold's uncle, now in Europe, or lose a possible ten thousand a year. At a tea Mabel meets her dearest friend Maude sees Mabel has a secret, she coaxes and Mabel tells her But Maude lets out the secret in a few minutes to another friend and so the secret travels.

THE OXFORD AFFAIR. A Comedy in Three Acts, by JOSEPHINE H. COBB and JENNIE E. PAINE. For eight female characters. Plays one hour and three-quarters. Scenes, interiors at a seaside hotel. Costumes, modern. The action of the play is located at a summer resort. Alice Graham, in order to chaperon herself, poses as a widow, and Miss Oxford first claims her as a sister-in-law, then denounces her. The onerous duties of Miss Oxford, who attempts to serve as chaperon to Miss Howe and Miss Ashton in the face of many obstacles, furnish an evening of rare enjoyment.

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